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Academisation as activism? Some paradoxes

Introduction

In this article, I will discuss how activism in higher music education might appear as ambiguous or even paradoxical. This is due to activism being likely to be associated with a critical attitude towards established hierarchies, on the one hand. On the other hand, one might ask if it can also lead to new hegemonic configurations of power within academia. In order to elaborate this argument, I will employ both empirical and theoretical approaches, most of which are derived from the sociology of education and culture.

The conceptual point of departure is Hale's (2001) definition of *activist research*, which, in his words, is characterised by the fact that it: a) helps us better to understand the root causes of inequality, oppression, violence and related conditions of human suffering; b) is carried out, at each phase from conception through dissemination, in direct cooperation with an organised collective of people who themselves are subject to these conditions; c) is used, together with the people in question, to formulate strategies for transforming these conditions and to achieve the power necessary to make these strategies effective (Hale 2001, 3). This may seem very similar to action research, but differs from it in that a significantly greater interest in theoretical development is emphasised. Thus one of the objectives of activist research is to develop a form of 'use-oriented basic research' (Stokes 1997). The theory and practice of activist research demand of the researchers that they identify their deepest ethical-political convictions, and allow these beliefs drive the formulation of their research objectives.

Based on a critical approach to the above definition, I will attempt to identify some cases of activist research in Norwegian higher music education. I have had access and insight into this field since I have been part of it from the late 1970s onwards, and more particularly through the ongoing research project *Musical gentrification and socio-cultural diversities*.[1] The extensive data material from the project comprises all Norwegian master's theses and doctoral dissertations in musicology, ethnomusicology, music education, music therapy, music technology and music performance in the period from 1912 to 2012, a total of 1695

[1] This project is jointly funded by The Research Council of Norway's funding scheme for independent projects (FRIPRO), Hedmark University College and the Norwegian Academy of Music for the period 2013-17. It comprises four senior researchers, one post doctoral researcher, one PhD candidate and two visiting scholars. More information can be found on the project website: www.hihm.no/MG

works. I will come back to a more detailed account of this project later on in the article, but I can already tell that analogous to the contradictions and paradoxes that appear through an analytical use of the sociological concepts and perspectives employed in the project, I will discuss activist research as a – perhaps unintentional or indirect, but nonetheless conceivable – strategy to achieve academic merit and positions, in parallel with discussions about what distinguishes a cultural elite in an egalitarian society (Ljunggren 2014). This is an argument supported by approaches such as Peterson's concept 'cultural omnivorousness' (Peterson 1992; Peterson & Simkus 1992; Peterson & Kern 1996) and the abovementioned notion of 'musical gentrification' (Dyndahl 2013, 2015; Dyndahl, Karlsen, Skårberg & Nielsen 2014; Dyndahl, Karlsen, Nielsen & Skårberg submitted), both indicating that people and groups that may appear to be consistently open-minded, change-oriented and inclusive of diverse voices and perspectives, also exert the power and influence to classify, marginalise and ultimately to exclude the who's and what's that have apparently been included.

Finally, I will discuss activism, omnivorisation and gentrification from an ethical point of view inspired by Spivak's (1988) postcolonial and feminist perspectives on the problems of representation, posing the question: *who can speak for whom?* The lesson to be learned from Spivak is that scholars – including, of course, activist researchers and educators – should not neglect to turn the mirror on themselves in order to attempt to thoroughly address their own academic interests and social positions. This proposal does not at all imply that activist research is to be invalidated, but rather that it is essential to come to terms with the complexities, dilemmas and paradoxes that this approach inevitably encompasses.

Theoretical and empirical backdrop

Bourdieu's concept of cultural capital (Bourdieu 1986/2011) has proven highly productive in interpreting distinctions and relations between high and low culture since the 1960s and 1970s, but also as a general conceptual tool to analyse the symbolic economy that still works next to the material one. In this way, cultural capital may appear in the varied shapes of embodied, objectified or institutionalised properties which gain value when they are exchanged or converted into other forms of capital, for instance economic and social ones. Although these relationships are changing throughout history, Bourdieu's division of capital forms points to a cultural circuit that connects institutions, specific cultural artefacts and individual agents in particular ways. Thus, cultural capital may also be defined in terms of objects and practices that are approved by the education system, which may then be brought into play by privileged classes as a strategy of inheritance by the next generation. In this

sense, Bourdieu argues that the sociology of culture is inseparable from the sociology of education, and vice versa. By way of example, in Western societies, higher music education and research was for long time almost exclusively concerned with highbrow art. And, in many respects, it thus fulfilled the demands of arts and education institutions, as well as their users and audiences. Low culture, of which popular music was a part, to some extent lived its own life, quite independent of cultural and educational policies, and was instead managed by the commercial market and media.

At the individual level, people seem to have a remarkable ability to understand and accept their place in the social structure. According to Bourdieu, this is not a question of rational insights, but rather of embodied social structures – related to social class, gender, ethnicity, age and so on – which are reproduced through habits, preferences and tastes developed over a substantial period of time, such as when growing up. The notion of habitus designates this composition of individual lifestyles, values, dispositions and expectations, strongly associated with and conditioned by particular social groups. In educational settings, the mechanisms of academic approval and ranking establish not only academic differences but also long-lasting cultural differences, which give emphasis to habitus as an incorporated system of perception and appreciation of socially situated practices:

> Habitus thus implies a 'sense of one's place' but also a 'sense of the place of others'. For example, we say of a piece of clothing, a piece of furniture, or a book: 'that looks petty-bourgeois' or 'that's intellectual'. (Bourdieu 1990, 131)

Bourdieu has elaborated on this as follows: "All of this is exactly encapsulated in the expression 'that looks' […] which serves to locate a position in social space through a stance taken in symbolic space" (Bourdieu 1990, 113). Obviously, this interpretation can be applied to music as well.

In the wake of Bourdieu, there have been a number of important sociological studies that have focused not only on how institutions deal with specific cultural forms, but also on whether and how individuals and groups are searching for and assessing specific forms of cultural capital. Since education, and especially higher education, is often regarded as a middle and upper-class endeavour, it may be of interest to examine this point of view in the light of some studies that explore alternative cultural configurations of these classes, although in many respects they also build upon Bourdieu's concepts. The new element is that from a certain point in time, what would previously have been dismissed as low culture can also accumulate high cultural capital.

In the 1990s, Peterson and his group of researchers reported that openness to diversity was beginning to replace exclusive preference for high culture as a means of class distinction, based on two sociological studies, conducted in 1982 and 1992 respectively, and focusing on cultural consumption and taste in the US (Peterson 1992; Peterson & Simkus 1992; Peterson & Kern 1996). This idea, labelled 'cultural omnivorousness', suggests that middle-to-upper-class taste does not necessarily assume an elitist form, but that high status has now become associated with a preference for, and participation in, a broad range of cultural genres and practices. This harmonises well with the notion that postmodern cultural socialisation encourages an aptitude for sampling and (re)mixing cultural forms. Peterson argues that an omnivorous taste is replacing the highbrow one as a central criterion for classifying elitist cultural habits and styles of consumption. Based on this it may seem as though an open-minded and inclusive attitude towards cultural consumption across social hierarchies has spread within the privileged classes, and thus also to cultural and educational institutions. The significant position popular music has achieved nowadays in Scandinavian music education at all levels as well as in music research may suggest the same.

While those holding high cultural capital according to Bourdieu's *Distinction* (1984) tended to orchestrate their cultural consumption and participation through various types of highbrow artworks and activities, Peterson and other post-Bourdieusian sociologists have established as a fact that an extended kind of cultural intake has become legitimate, although there are still genre boundaries that are not easily crossed. For instance, classical music is primarily cultivated by the dominant classes, while some forms of popular music – particularly those styles and genres that are in general considered to be lowbrow – appear to be relatively stigmatised, even for cultural omnivores. Moreover, as was indicated by Peterson and further emphasised by a large-scale, Bourdieu-inspired study of cultural consumption in the UK (Bennett et al. 2009), while it seems no longer to matter so much *what* one is engaged in, it is still of great importance *how* one is exercising one's commitment. These clarifications refine the concept of cultural omnivorousness in an important manner. Thus, it is still the intellectual aestheticising and distanced intertextual approach to works and practices of art, analogous to the distinguished behaviour described by Bourdieu (1984) that embodies the appropriate dominant-class mode of cultural consumption, and thereby contributes to the accumulation of cultural capital. But because the elite's cultural consumption now includes a wider array of styles and genres than it did previously, distinctions between what provides high and low capital must be expressed in more subtle

ways. Hence, one is faced with the challenging task of emerging as inclusive and exclusive at the same time.

I will return to how academics and scholars may exercise their fascination and commitment to low culture in more specific ways in the next two sections of the article, but first I will present in greater depth the concept 'musical gentrification' (Dyndahl 2013, 2015; Dyndahl et al. 2014; Dyndahl et al. submitted), which has been introduced in connection with the aforementioned research project *Musical gentrification and socio-cultural diversities*. The concept was developed in order to point out that the ongoing expansion of curricular content in Norwegian music education, which largely includes popular music, may be interpreted as an equivalent to what happens in urban gentrification when artists, academics and educated-class residents, for instance, begin to settle in low-income and working-class areas. This process typically implies that both the standard and the status of the properties and the neighbourhood will be raised, while, at the same time, many of the original residents are forced to move out, not only because of the obvious economic reasons but because they feel alienated from a neighbourhood that is increasingly unfamiliar. Against this background, musical gentrification is perceived and defined in this way by the research group:

> On these grounds, and in the given theoretical context, we refer to musical gentrification as complex processes with both inclusionary and exclusionary outcomes, by which musics, musical practices, and musical cultures of relatively lower status are made to be objects of acquisition by subjects who inhabit higher or more powerful positions. As with the examples borrowed from urban geography and described above, these processes strongly contribute to changing the characteristics of particular musical communities as well as the musics, practices, and cultures that are subjected to gentrification. (Dyndahl et al. 2014, 54)

As with the above notion of cultural omnivorousness, musical gentrification emphasises that these concepts find themselves in the paradoxical situation that they are both inclusive and exclusive; they comprise attractive as well as repellent features. A concrete example of how this works in higher music education can be witnessed in Olsson's (1993) study of what happened when jazz, pop, rock and folk music were included as new elements in the Swedish music teacher education programme SÄMUS in the 1970s, while the traditional teaching methods, objectives and assessment criteria of the classical conservatory tradition still regulated the field of higher music education as such, and thus pushed the new genres into pre-existing values, forms and practices.

My critical suggestion is that the situation may be just as paradoxical when it comes to activist research. With the above considerations regarding cultural capital, omnivorisation and

musical gentrification in mind, I will proceed to discuss a couple of instances from Norwegian higher music education in terms of activism. That is, I will present brief examinations of two cases, which I argue might be interpreted as examples – or, at a conservative estimate, rudiments – of an activist approach. I believe that they meet most of the criteria designed by Hale (2001), at least if one is willing to accept that the people who are the victims of disadvantageous and/or discriminatory conditions, in some of these cases could be potential students with musical backgrounds that would have made it difficult or impossible to be admitted to higher music education unless the activist initiatives had been implemented. Likewise the strategies for transforming these conditions and making the required alterations could be seen as reforms and changes within higher music education itself.

Activist academisation as omnivorisation

Around 1970, for the first time in Norway a postgraduate programme in musicology was established outside the University of Oslo. This programme was offered by the Norwegian College of Education in Trondheim (NLHT), which had become part of the University of Trondheim (UNIT) in 1968. In 1995 the University of Trondheim was renamed as the Norwegian University of Science and Technology (NTNU). The programme is still running there.

The newly established musicology programme was expected to have a special responsibility for the area and the region in which it was situated, that is the mid and northern parts of Norway. The first postgraduate students and their supervisors seem to have interpreted this mission as writing historical dissertations on the art music of the region, and in the first two years, several theses of this type were submitted. However, a group of what Bourdieu (1977) would call heterodox agents soon appeared, displaying a more activist-like approach. They were eager to conduct research on local music that was not necessarily recognized by cultural and educational institutions, for instance hybrid forms of vernacular and traditional dance music. These were musical and cultural practices, which, at this time, were not only neglected by academics and cultural authorities, but they were not ascribed particular value even by those who participated in the cultures themselves. The research was carried out as ethnographic studies in small, rural communities, and in collaboration with influential participants in these areas, which was all new to Norwegian musicology. The first thesis of this type was submitted at the University of Trondheim in 1973, to be followed by others in the years to come, and I think it is fair to claim that a couple of these projects led to

increased self-esteem within the communities who had participated in the research projects (see Ledang, Holen & Diesen 1972-73). In this way the projects were conducted in accordance with an important criterion for activist research. In addition, being part of these projects also improved the confidence as socially aware, progressive researchers among those who conducted the activist academisation of traditional lowbrow culture.

Yet another effect was that some of those who were students and supervisors in these projects were appointed to key positions in the increasingly attractive and expanding field of music studies at UNIT/NTNU. A few of them became professors and have exercised great influence on several generations of music students, especially in this part of Norway, acting as key trendsetters and gatekeepers in determining what is considered legitimate music research at the Department of Musicology, and what is not. Still this did not come about without opposition from within the field of the classical musicology. The activist orientation, however, won most of the internal battles and has at times dominated the education and research profile of this particular department. Of course, this illustrates a fairly typical situation in the Western academic world. The fact that tensions and conflicts are part of the daily routines of academia is thus a trivial point, and completely in line with how Bourdieu (1988) describes the university as a specific social field. It may at first glance, however, appear as somewhat paradoxical, if not surprising, that an activist base that aims to better understand and ultimately overcome situations of inequality, marginalisation and oppression, also serves as a power base from which to achieve and maintain a new academic hegemony. But it should certainly not be surprising. Ljunggren (2014) argues that for something to function as cultural capital it must be rooted somewhere; someone must guarantee its value. Those who already have the most cultural capital – in the academic world that would normally be the professors – will have the greatest classification power over what should count as legitimate cultural capital both in the present and the future. Therefore, these groups may be said to represent the cultural elite in academia, with the power to influence what should be researched and how, to control the contents of education, and to regulate access to high academic positions. This is how the symbolic economy works, according to its general assumptions; in society as a whole and at the university on a smaller scale, whatever theoretical or methodological base one works from. This is also how the abovementioned musical gentrification is manifested, with both inclusionary and exclusionary effects. Nonetheless, there may be other, more ethically inspired responses to this paradox as well, which I will return to later.

As an extension of the above academic-activist interest in vernacular music cultures that shaped the music academia of Trondheim in the early years, I argue that also the subsequent, overall academisation, institutionalisation and gentrification of jazz and popular music in Norwegian higher music education can be interpreted in terms of activism. When this education during the 1970s and 1980s gradually opened up to students (and later teachers and researchers) with backgrounds from popular music and cognate music genres, by allowing auditions and tuition for instruments that belonged to jazz, rock and the like, it also welcomed groups and communities who had long been marginalised or excluded from higher music education and legitimate culture. And when these students eventually entered postgraduate programmes, we could observe that they were likely to follow their research interests in the direction of jazz and popular musics. The first Norwegian thesis within this diverse musical field appeared in 1974, in the form of a work on contemporary jazz, submitted to the University of Oslo. Since then, there has been a consistent increase in the number of theses that deal with various popular music genres and styles, as is shown by the data material of the *Musical gentrification and socio-cultural diversities* project, which will be reported in a number of forthcoming publications by the research group (see Dyndahl et al. submitted).

After the first appearance in 1974, the percentage of Norwegian master's theses and doctoral dissertations dealing with popular music reached close to 20 per cent in 1980 and remained around that level for several years. The first time the percentage exceeded 30 per cent was in 2006, after which point this level has been maintained. When it comes to musical styles within jazz and popular music, the styles that in general can be considered the most successfully gentrified are mainstream and contemporary jazz, rock and pop. Correspondingly, there is considerably less interest in styles such as early jazz, country music, blues, rock and roll, punk rock, heavy metal, funk, hip-hop, contemporary R&B and Electronic Dance Music. However, there is a large number of theses and also some dissertations in which popular music is included as for example a more general part of youth culture or within music education or music therapy practices, but where it is not possible to identify any specific style. This applies to the Scandinavian concept of 'rhythmic music' (see the next section) as well. An interesting finding is the complete lack of interest in Scandinavian dance band music – a widely popular musical style in Norway, as in Sweden, and a genre that has been dealt with within other research disciplines, such as sociology, media studies and cultural studies, but which Norwegian music academia so far seems to keep

at arm's length. A possible explanation is that this music is so closely linked to low culture, and its audiences have never adopted approaches and attitudes that would be interpreted as alternative or cool in mainstream society. Apparently, it is just seen as Scandinavian redneck music, with which the average music scholar does not want to be associated (Dyndahl et al. 2015).

In many ways, our data confirm the understanding mediated by the concepts cultural omnivorousness and musical gentrification, as it shows that not even the activist omnivores consume everything. Consequently, although a lot of music genres are gentrified there is always something and someone excluded, a practice that occurs in accordance with cultural norms and taste hierarchies in society as a whole. However, when we see the stylistic distribution of popular music in conjunction with other data we possess about who supervisors are, and which students have had success in advancing within the academic system, I can briefly point to two prolific strategies – both detected in our study – related to the academisation of popular music in higher education and research.

On the one hand, one can focus one's research interest on music and music practices that have a certain 'hipster' popularity to them, which is probably why the Scandinavian dance band music has been neglected by academic attention. On the other hand, if one is committed to the more middle-of-the-road-oriented popular music repertoire, one could perhaps try to wrap it up in some kind of hipster-like theory, for instance when a thesis dedicated to country music might employ gender theory in quite sophisticated ways, or if chart pop is dealt with by means of feminist and performativity theory, perhaps in part, as a means to legitimise a focus on 'illegitimate' styles in the academic field. Hence, as mentioned above, it is of great importance how one is exercising one's commitment, even when engaging in activist research on inequality, marginalisation and related conditions in music and music education.

Institutionalisation as gentrification

Again using higher music education in Trondheim as an example, I will in this section discuss the institutionalisation of jazz music. In 1979, music teacher education with an emphasis on jazz was started as a pilot project at the Trøndelag Music Conservatory. This represents the beginning of an increasingly famous success story of jazz studies in Trondheim. The Conservatory became part of the Norwegian University of Science and Technology (NTNU) in 1996 and in 2002 the conservatory studies were merged with the above Department of Musicology into a joint Department of Music. The jazz programme has for a long time been

described and promoted as a flagship for the NTNU, as well as for the Norwegian music scene in general and higher music education in particular.

There were two main reasons for establishing the jazz programme. On the one hand the conservatory had experienced a drop in student recruitment and insufficient funding. The institution was therefore looking for initiatives that would attract more students. On the other hand some of the students who were already admitted as classical music students had jazz backgrounds and were just as interested in playing this music as classical styles. Also, a few teachers had a similar background; they were or had been jazz musicians but were educated in classical music and therefore appointed as teachers of music theory, composition and the like, at what has been described as a rather conservative conservatory (Bjørklund & Aksdal 2012). Thus the heterodox teachers shared the desires of the student group to reform the conservatory in a direction that took jazz and improvisation seriously. Led by a decisive conservatory teacher, a veritable activist campaign was conducted in order to gentrify jazz music at the institution, targeting both the management of the conservatory and national education policy authorities, and with the active support of the local jazz scene. The first jazz students were admitted in 1979 and in 1982 the pilot project was made permanent. Over the years, a large number of prominent Norwegian jazz musicians have received their education from this programme, making it perhaps the most important institution for jazz learning in the country.

Having witnessed such a success it was probably not surprising that other conservatories and universities wanted to follow suit. Or rather, variations on the same theme started to occur one by one. For example, in 1984 the Norwegian Academy of Music opened its programme in music education to applicants with a background in 'improvised music/jazz', while Agder University College (which in 2007 became the University of Agder) adopted the original Danish term 'rhythmic music' – denoting a wider range of genres, including rock, jazz and improvisation-based music with elements of folk and world music – in establishing its own popular music programme seven years later. However, in his study of the formation of the latter programme, Tønsberg (2007, 2013) describes repeatedly how the teachers who were responsible for it felt the colleagues from the jazz education in Trondheim disrespected their broader approach, not least because they had once insulted them by characterising the rhythmic music programme as a study in lounge music at a national conference on jazz education and research in 1993. This anecdote illustrates some underlying discourses about differentation, hierarchy and supremacy, through which hegemonic power

and authority are likely to find expression in requests and arguments about what appears to be the most 'genuine' or 'authentic' forms of African-American music.

Controversies about authenticity play a significant role in higher music education, not least when it comes to the justification, legitimation and implementation of jazz and popular music (Dyndahl & Nielsen 2014). For instance, DeVeaux (1999) argues how important it is for jazz not to be associated with popular music in general but rather with how a musical tradition that at one point becomes a new form of art is described by the institutionalised, academic historiography of jazz:

> Only by acquiring the prestige, the "cultural capital" (in Pierre Bourdieu's phrase) of an artistic tradition can the music hope to be heard, and its practitioners receive the support commensurate with their training and accomplishments. The accepted historical narrative of jazz serves this purpose. It is a pedigree, showing contemporary jazz to be not a fad or a mere popular music, subject to the whims of fashion, but an autonomous art of some substance, the culmination of a long process of maturation that has in its own way recapitulated the evolutionary progress of Western art. (DeVeaux 1999, 418)

DeVeaux also claims that after the manifestation of the high artistic level jazz had achieved with bebop in the 1940s: "the evolutionary lineage begins to dissolve into the inconclusive coexistence of many different, and in some cases mutually hostile, styles" (DeVeaux 1999, 418). This underlines that the relationship between music and authenticity should be understood in terms of what Stokes (1994) refers to as a discursive trope connecting music closely with the identification process:

> It focuses a way of talking about music, a way of saying to outsiders and insiders alike 'this is what is really significant about this music', 'this is the music that makes us different from other people'. (Stokes 1994, 7)

Furthermore, Moore (2002) reminds us that authenticity is not an inherent property of music, but something that is attributed to specific genres and practices: "It is ascribed, not inscribed" (Ibid., 210). He further argues that researchers should ask questions about "who, rather than what, is being authenticated" (Ibid., 220), so that they would describe more precisely authenticity as processes rather than specific qualities of the music itself.

Although it is my impression that there is and has been an armistice between the different educational programmes in jazz, 'rhythmic' and other popular musics in Norwegian higher education for some time now, contradictions and conflicts may always be smouldering beneath the surface. These may become more visible under specific circumstances, for

example, if the situation changes when it comes to student recruitment and funding. And that is, to paraphrase Bourdieu, when interests and positions in social and economic space may be fought under the guise of stances taken in symbolic space, which may well be about authenticity or other, seemingly immaterial values and capitals.

However, the dualities of gentrification will probably penetrate at some level anyway. When something is included, something else is being excluded. Aside from the rigid genre hierarchies within both jazz and most popular musics, there is another big elephant in the room. I cannot recall that any activist from within the Norwegian academic jazz community has ever confronted head-on the gendered stereotypes of this music and its practices. Jazz must be one of those places in music and music education where informal marginalisation and exclusion based on gender are most widespread and accepted. For example, there were only 28 women among the 216 students who were admitted to the jazz programme in Trondheim from 1979 to 2006. And among female jazz students, three out of four were vocalists (Svedal 2006, 37). But when scholars from other disciplines have tried to critically address gender issues in Nordic jazz (see for example Annfelt 2003; Lorentzen & Stavrum 2007), they have been met with stoic silence, resigned rejection or determined defence. That being said, I certainly hope this debate is not silenced.

Concluding remarks on ethics and self-reflexivity

In order to address some important ethical issues concerning the paradoxes of activism, my final consideration is what music educators and scholars should take into account when assuming the role of spokesperson for those whose musical and cultural values and perspectives tend to be gentrified, marginalised or tabooed. The overall issue, here, seems to be the aforementioned problem of representation: *who can speak for whom?* In her seminal essay "Can the subaltern speak?" Spivak (1988) scrutinises the idea of representation. With reference to Marx's (1852/1954) differentiation of the notion of representation by means of the two German words *vertreten* and *darstellen*, Spivak shows how even prominent Central European scholars and researchers may not distinguish clearly between the two meanings: "Two senses of representation are being run together: representation as 'speaking for,' as in politics, and representation as 're-presentation,' as in art or philosophy" (Spivak 1988, 275), she claims. However, she maintains that there is an affiliation between the two dimensions, from whence we:

> […] encounter a much older debate: between representation or rhetoric as tropology and as persuasion. *Darstellen* belongs to the first constellation, *vertreten* – with

> stronger suggestions of substitution – to the second. Again, they are related, but running them together, especially in order to say that beyond both is where oppressed subjects speak, act, and know for *themselves*, leads to an essentialist, utopian politics. (Spivak 1988, 276)

In an ethical-political perspective, Spivak (1988) criticises Western intellectuals, among other things, for apparently re-presenting the voices of people who are subject to inequality, oppression, violence and related conditions as if the highbrows themselves were 'absent nonrepresenters'. In this way, she argues, that while "representing them, the intellectuals represent themselves as transparent" (Ibid., 275), whereas they actually re-present the oppressed subjects from what we must assume to be an unaware perspective that implicitly contributes to defining them as the Other, in part by consistently referring to them as being more homogeneous than the intellectuals' own group.

The insight that when acting as a representative of something, one simultaneously re-presents or interprets it from a certain position – exemplified in a range of theoretical concepts, such as situated knowledge, discursive subject positions, or the deeply rooted habitus – entails attentiveness to the recognition that any statement, any attitude, conveys a positional, normative interpretation; conscious or unconscious. However, this may be particularly challenging with respect to the ostensibly tolerant and inclusive self-understanding denoted by the concepts of omnivorousness and gentrification. This awareness should not least be applied to the normative practices of researchers and teachers who seem to manage the knowledge and the language of knowledge in an open-minded, disinterested manner. Education, institutionalisation and academisation must in this context be seen as cultivation practices according to the power, significance and standardised distinctions arising from the specific values of cultural capital, as well as the incorporated norms of habitus – including the social anatomy of taste.

Thus it is not possible to understand representation without entailing re-presentation. It is also not possible to think of re-presentation without acting as a representative of anyone's interest. Spivak responds to the paradoxes in this way:

> To confront them is not to represent *(vertreten)* them but to learn to represent *(darstellen)* ourselves. This argument would take us into a critique of a disciplinary anthropology and the relationship between elementary pedagogy and disciplinary formation. (Spivak 1988, 288f)

If there is one lesson to be learned from Spivak, it is that we must apply these insights to ourselves as academics and scholars, in the sense that we should not neglect to use the

analytic tools provided by theory and methodology to examine, not only our obvious motives, but also the internalized configuration of motives for cultural choices and decisions, in academic as well as daily life. For instance, those who to a large extent are the enthusiastic driving forces behind gentrification, urban as well as musical, are academics, certainly including activist researchers.

In other words: middle and upper-class academics, educators and researchers should attempt to address their own position thoroughly, in order to remove the transparency cloak and thereby make some of their class (and gender) habitus and culturally capitalised power evident, not least when it comes to music genres and cultural practices they may distance themselves from for various normative unconscious reasons – in some cases, probably occasioned by the socio-cultural mechanisms and dynamics of cultural omnivorousness and musical gentrification.

But again, obviously, when writing *they* and *them*, I should perhaps rather have written *we* and *us*, not to say *I* and *me*. Often, however, a self-reflexive perspective seems to be the most difficult to capture; that is, we may have trouble seeing our own, habitually unrecognized or misrecognized position as situated in a specific symbolic value system. In my case it is important to clarify once and for all that I have nothing in particular against the music academia in Trondheim. This is the city where I was born and raised in a non-academic environment, but later on acquired an important part of my academic habitus as a music student, graduating with a master's degree in musicology from the University of Trondheim in 1986. My thesis explored the relationship between the music industry and children's musical cultures (Dyndahl 1986). That way, it confirmed its affiliation with the Department of Musicology's predominant doxa of the period, while it also served as a stepping stone to a permanent position in Norwegian teacher education and academia.

Taking a broader perspective, one can argue that the above discussed examples from UNIT/NTNU display some general patterns that may be found in any academic institution. Yet, the analysis of data from the *Musical gentrification and socio-cultural diversities* project shows that this particular university is one of three institutions that stand out in the popular music academic field and lead the way in the process of musical gentrification among Norwegian universities and academies (see Dyndahl et al. submitted), thus making it especially interesting for me, both professionally and personally.

Returning again to activist research, Hale (2001) claims that this must be one of the areas where identification and reflection about the ethical and other issues can make a difference:

> Inevitably activist research projects come with their share of tensions, contradictions and ethical dilemmas. An ancillary proposition is that the research outcome is improved when such tensions are identified and confronted directly. (Hale 2001, 3)

In my opinion, Spivak's approach penetrates to the core of the ethical tensions, dilemmas and contradictions of activist research. All at once, she identifies and confronts us, the researchers, with the requirement of critical self-reflexivity and personal responsibility. In addition, her attitude can inspire us to create a necessary corrective to a dominant, somewhat self-sufficient, conception that trusts that music and music education are invariably of benefit to both self-realisation and social inclusion. In the same vein, Hesmondhalgh (2008) argues that this assumption must rest on an overly optimistic – though paradoxical – understanding, which implies that music, on the one hand, is considered crucial for beneficial social and individual development, while it is, on the other hand, seen as totally unaffected by negative factors:

> The dominant conception rightly emphasises the social nature of music and of self-identity, but if music is as imbricated with social processes as the dominant conception suggests, then it is hard to see how people's engagement with music can be so consistently positive in their effects, when we live in societies that are marked by inequality, exploitation and suffering. (Hesmondhalgh 2008, 334)

A legitimate response to this paradox would be to argue that it is not only hard – it is futile. If music and music education are so essential for the individual and the community as we like to think, they cannot have only positive outcomes, but must necessarily also be affected by, and even affect, some negative social and historical processes. However, recognizing this is for many music educators an equally unbearable thought as it is for activist researchers to realise that activism, even with the best of intentions, may also lead anew to inequality, marginalisation and exclusion.

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